

THE 5-D MODEL ANALYSIS OF BRD & BT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN TERMS OF THE CHARACTERS THAT APPEAR IN ADVERTISEMENTS

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Abstract:

In times of difficult and unstable economic environment, market players try to differentiate themselves in order to survive and attract a large number of new customers. Financial institutions, as well as the full service segment, face a major obstacle, as in the negative power of intangibility, that is reflected in the specific economic process. The "battle" for a place in front is increasingly fierce, and financial companies have begun to focus towards the removal of this drawback, and finding new communication techniques and actions, by assigning the company with some new values that will lead to greater confidence shown within consumers. In this article, we will try to underline two different tests of image association, as in the campaigns conducted by BRD - Groupe Societe Generale and Banca Transilvania, combining an endorsement campaign with a fairytale character, all of this processed through the filter of Romania's set of cultural characteristics.

Keywords: cultural values, Hofstede, financial institutes, endorsement, image association.

Introduction

"The specific way of learning the lifestyle of a society" is one of the most simplistic definitions of culture given by experts in the field (Kotler, 2001). Cultural dimensions include: the social organization of society, religion, customs and rituals, values and attitudes towards national and international quality of life, educational training, political system, art (folklore, music, literature) and language. Thus, each country has its own traditions, cultural norms and taboos. When we speak of global marketing strategies, every company must understand how culture affects consumer behavior in each international market outlet. At the same time, they need to know how culture affects the used strategies.

In the early '70s, Geert Hofstede conducted a study at IBM to find a explanation for the fact that some concepts of motivation did not work in all countries in the same way. Using a scale from 0 to 100, he identified five dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-Term Orientation. Marieke de Mooij extended the applicability of this study to determine whether and in what context are cultural values reflected in advertising and whether there is a correlation between consumer behavior and Hofstede's dimensions (Mooij, M. , 1998). According to the study realized by "The Gallup Organization" in 2005, using the Hofstede methodology, Romania is characterized as

collectivism, with a large power distance, feminine, with a high uncertainty avoidance and a short-term orientation.

Advertising requires representations concerning the roles of individuals in society, values and lifestyle. It has the role to communicate different cultural concepts (love, success, win, emotions etc.). Advertising specialists should pay particular attention to advertising campaigns because, according to some authors, they can form false values.

The analysis undertaken in the following pages studies the presence of cultural elements in BRD and BT advertisements based on the cultural model developed by Professor Hofstede, in terms of the characters that appear in commercials.

Individualism versus Collectivism

The contrast between individualism and collectivism can be defined as people who pursue their own interests and that of their families versus people belonging to a group that cares for them in exchange for their loyalty.

Individualism is reflected in the desire for freedom, independence, uniqueness, confidence, expressed directly and explicitly through the use of the pronouns "you", "us", "me" in advertising campaigns. However, in collectivist cultures, a person who is seen alone is considered one without friends, without an identity. In this case, the individual is integrated into a group belonging to a class or a lifestyle that serves to convey information and to persuade other members to "join" the group. Also, the tendency to imitate is sometimes indiscriminately more pronounced in markets dominated by collectivism.

According to the survey conducted in 2005, the Romanian society is a collectivist culture, but with an increasing value towards individualism. If we take a look at the values that build

the company's image of both BRD and BT, we can observe that the first brand image association was based on the characters real life achievements during his lifetime career, while BT had focused its actions to maintain the sincerity of the message displayed by the man with the magic wand.

The strongest message sent by the BRD campaign is that you can rely on it in the process of becoming "big", touching together the heights of success, all with the proper trust received from your partner, the bank. Looking closer, we find that the default area of sport is characterized by fair play, teamwork, motivation, success, strength and many other attributes that perfectly fit this situation, that of improving brand awareness and financial results. Also, choosing these three remarkable characters of relatively recent history has been the very core of the campaign, because of the gratitude acquired through hard work, talent, ambition, and achievements. We can say that the BRD campaign shows real elements of collectivism, because behind of the performances achieved by the athletes, stands the help that was given to them by friends or family, and what determined them to become what they are today. Also, the fact that these individuals have become true symbols and ambassadors of a country makes individualism present.

Things, as they were seen by BT, were those of a very specific world, where small businesses fight for maintaining their position, a world that sometimes needs a miracle in order to be "saved". As regarding the miracles, the people at BT have said that there are likely to exist, but there is the character "Zânu", an individual with a great outlet to the public who seems very credible with the sincerity and nonchalance that is show every time he is put in contact with the customers.

In promoting the image of BT, the presence of the well mentioned

character has a hint of individualism, but the way in which he tries to help people that he considers as friends on an equal level, leads to collectivist values.

Masculinity versus Femininity

Viewed through this filter, the existing dominant values in a masculine culture are orientated to success and wealth accumulation, aspects that are necessary within the road to performance, since gains and achievements are essential to an individual's status in society. In a feminine culture, the emphasis is placed on the person how is near to you, on the quality of life, modesty, sensitivity and understanding of people.

Advertisements from male cultures are related to: competition, ambition, motivation of dominance, superiority, self-centeredness, the benefits obtained through consumption / use of the product or service promoted and the performance obtained. On the other hand, feminine cultures adopt advertising themes such as emotions, provision and modesty, tolerance, ethnocentrism, docility. The creative message size is related to symbols, music, characters and rhetorical figures, being realized in an indirect and subtle way.

Regarding the association's image campaign between BRD and the Romanian legendary athletes, they wanted to create a subtle and touching message about the importance of supporting a development process, regardless of its nature, presenting real stories of career beginnings, all in a feminine culture emphasizing way. However, we notice the presence of the masculine orientated culture in promoting the power of success and supporting the fulfillment of economic related dreams.

If we look at the combination of the BT image campaign, we also note the existence of a story here, but this time a fictional one. The bank is improving its

image by sending a message that is addressed to their "friends" (the costumers), having a central character that with his ferric ways, sustains and promotes the actions of helping. Also, by his appearance and behavior, "Zânul" is a combination of masculine strength and feminine sensibility, and therefore are present features of both cultural values.

Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension can be defined as the way people feel threatened by uncertainty and try to avoid certain situations. Strong uncertainty avoidance translates into "the need for explanations, structure, long copy, testing, and testimonials by experts, but also into high regard for technology and design". How the product works is shown through demonstrations and technical details. The experts who present the qualities of the product are represented by anonymous people or celebrities who play the role of the expert or are experts themselves. In the advertisements of weak uncertainty avoidance cultures, the parodies of experts who come in front of the potential consumers and present them the advantages of the promoted product are accepted.

Romanians prefer the safety of today in favor of the insecure future. This is the reason why the characters of advertisements are experts, specialists who inform the consumers about the features and benefits of the product. Furthermore, there is a need for additional information, explications and demonstrations in order to persuade the consumer to buy the product.

BRD is using an endorsement campaign where three of the Romanian sports celebrities (Nadia Comăneci, Gheorghe Hagi and Ilie Năstase) appear in the advertisements to create a favorable attitude toward the public attachment to the brand. This is the reason why the advertisements falls

into neither category. Although these three celebrities are not experts in the banking field, they create a favorable image of the bank and induce a feeling of trust to the customers. These three celebrities are what you may call a national brand, not only in Romania, but also abroad, so the way BRD chose to promote their own image is not only obvious, but almost sure to succeed.

Unlike the full accuracy and official image of the BRD, BT focuses to another kind of approach, a very attractive and inspired one. The image of the bank became a character found in stories, "Zânul", represented by a massive man who wears a black suit with a ballerina skirt wearing a princess crown and holding magic wand, by which he meets the customers' needs. He is the specialist that communicates the latest details to potential clients, assuring them that the product meets their desires. In fact, "Zânul" wants to represent a Tooth Fairy, who fulfils the customers wishes, whose story originally appeared as a product campaign, but caught so well that became the image campaign for BT. The techniques used in the advertisements were humor and situations in which every client can find himself. The hybrid between the Tooth Fairy and the specialist of the bank represents in fact a charismatic character that puts a smile upon people faces, element which can be included in the ones specific to weak uncertainty avoidance cultures. The bank decided on this character because people trust tradition which is a guarantee of the social value of the product.

Long-Term Orientation

In cultures with a short-term orientation, like Romania, advertising campaigns call for promotions or discounts offered for a period of time. Compared to cultures with a long-term orientation, in which people "save for

tomorrow", in cultures with a focus on short-term they "buy now and pay later".

By using the image of these three champions in advertisements, BRD execute an endorsement campaign in which no evidence of the elements of this dimension was found. Instead, in the commercials of Banca Transilvania, "Zânul" provides such offers ("With Master Card Forte you have an interest-free holiday, with zero duty by March". "The new credit line for SMEs is ready guaranteed". "In celebration of our fifteen years we reward your loyalty. Choose two products from our anniversary offer and you will win a birthday gift").

Power Distance

Power distance can be translated into "the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally". In large power distance cultures each person has a rightful place in the social hierarchy and authority is received in a natural way, compared with small power distance cultures which are characterized by an equal distribution of rights and opportunities at work.

BRD advertisements don't include many elements regarding long distance power cultures. The campaign entitled "Behind great figures are other great people" is in antithesis to the statement "There are great people and ordinary people" which appears in the commercials, the main idea of the advertisements being that the bank sustains you and supports your decisions. The bank is an important part of the consumer's life and it is compared to the persons in the commercials who had a decisive role in the evolution of the personalities' careers, helping them to fulfill their dreams of becoming "great persons".

The message conveyed is that BRD will always be near his clients and support them in any activity, leading the

customers to the heights of success. For the company, ordinary people are as important as the famous ones; philosophy reflected in BRD profile: through specific products and services the bank supports its customers. BRD - Groupe Société Générale won the first prize in the category „Corporate reputation, image and identity”, award which sustains the idea we've mentioned before. A contest, which has the same characters as the campaign, was launched at the end of November and the winner will have the chance to meet Nadia Comăneci. Even if the bank is using the status of celebrities in order to persuade people to enter the contest, element specific to long distance power cultures, the message delivered is they didn't forget that at the beginning of their career they were ordinary people too.

Although Romania is part of large power distance cultures, the analyzed bank advertisements seem to have elements specific to short power distance cultures. BT started the "Zânul" campaign in a moment where the bank market needed a fresh new dimension of what advertisements meant. The purpose of the bank was to improve their image in the consumer's mind by using messages as coming from a "friend". Even if "Zânul" represents the bank specialist, he is no longer a "judge" ready to decide the financial faith of the consumers; he is a person you can trust.

Conclusions

The financial companies analyzed in this article are heading in opposite directions in terms of promotion and

communication policy: endorsement (BRD) and the fairytale world (BT). Even so, both of them are trying to reach a higher level of customer care: the first is focusing on customer support in order to achieve the pinnacle of success, having those three players as models, and the second, using a friendly image of the bank within a hybrid character who presents the features of the promoted product. We need to take into account the fact that the characters were also chosen according to different customer segments.

However, we may observe that the banks advertisements include specific elements of Romania's culture, that stand at the association process between characters and financial companies values. Both BRD and BT have specific elements of individualism and collectivism cultures, as well as masculine and feminine values. While BT is using an expert (" Zânul "), element specific of high uncertainty avoidance cultures , BRD uses these endorsers who are not experts, but with their status image of national symbols, they provide reliable power and brand awareness.

BT advertisements have specific element of short-term orientation cultures, but in contrast with BRD which uses an endorsement campaign, these elements are missing. Regarding the power distance, contraire to the study taken in Romania which affirmed that we are a long distance culture, in both BRD and BT advertisements we observed elements of small power distance.

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